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Mobile UDC: Online media content distribution among Finnish mobile Internet users

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Abstract

This paper examines the significance of user-distributed content (UDC) for news consumption, thereby offering an innovative take on mass communication and the participatory audience. From the viewpoint of media organizations, UDC is a process by which the mass media converge with online social networks through the intentional use of social media and other platforms and services in an effort to expand the distribution of media content. In order to focus specifically on mobile news consumption, this paper sheds light on the novel phenomenon of mobile user-distributed content (mobile UDC). Mobile UDC is manifested in mobile users' ability to share online media content on a perpetual and ubiquitous basis. The study utilizes the results from a survey carried out with Finnish Internet users. The main finding is that mobile Internet users are more active in UDC than those who do not use the Internet with mobile devices. It is thus argued that mobile UDC, as a developing concept, can be used to explain the practices that are characteristic of mobile online news consumption.

Keywords

mobile devices, mobile Internet, mobile news consumption, mobile user-distributed content, user-distributed content

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Introduction

The co-production of content and the utilization of user-generated content (UGC) are considered integral to the legacy news media's ability to take advantage of the participatory online audience. However, UGC as a concept does not necessarily create the most adequate framework for understanding the role of audience work in online social networks, because the focus is often misguidedly placed on users' ability to produce, rather than distribute, content (Napoli, 2009). Therefore, the discussion of UGC should be supplemented with a discussion of user-distributed content (UDC) when attempting to describe the instrumental activities of the audience from the perspective of the legacy news media.

Online social networks provide a setting for the ongoing flow of interpersonal communication among users, which offers new possibilities for the distribution of media content. In this paper, we use the concept of UDC to describe the practices of the horizontal, peer-to-peer distribution of media content (such as online newspaper articles). From the viewpoint of media organizations, UDC is a process by which the mass media converge with online social networks through the intentional use of social media services and other platforms in an effort to expand the distribution of media content (Villi, Matikainen, & Khaldarova, in press; see also Napoli, 2009; Oeldorf-Hirsch & Sundar, 2012; Villi, 2012). Practices related to UDC (although not using the UDC concept) have also been discussed in Bechmann (2012); Glynn, Huge, and Hoffman (2011); Hermida, Fletcher, Korrell, and Logan (2012); Himmelboim and McCreery (2012); Jung and Moro (2012); Kleis Nielsen and Schröder (2014); Lee and Ma (2012); and Weeks and Holbert (2012). Singer (2014) has insightfully coined the term "user-generated visibility," which is very close to UDC. However, earlier research on UDC has not focused on examining issues that are of specific concern to mobile media studies.

Therefore, in this paper, we develop the concept of UDC further and examine the role of mobile media in UDC practices, thus concentrating on *mobile UDC*. With the growing diffusion of mobile media, media companies are increasingly prone to create content for mobile devices, particularly mobile phones and tablet computers. Importantly for mobile UDC, recent studies indicate that for smartphone and tablet computer users, social networking is an increasingly popular way to obtain media content (Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Christian, 2012a; Sasseen, Olmstead, & Mitchell, 2013). Studies also show that mobile and tablet users are more active in sharing digital media content than PC users (Newman, 2012).

In this paper, UDC acts as an overarching conceptual frame, although the few existing studies on UDC do not yet provide a firm or generally acknowledged theoretical framework. In addition to conceptualizing mobile UDC, we contribute to the empirical study of mobile UDC by means of quantitative data obtained from a survey carried out in Finland. Based on our analysis, we argue that mobile UDC is an increasingly relevant practice for the study of news consumption in the age of mobile media.

The paper is structured as follows. First, we review the previous research related to UDC and mobile news consumption. The study rationale lies in theoretically elaborating mobile UDC by incorporating mobile communication studies into the discussion of UDC, thereby synthesizing two areas of study that have been largely unconnected. After discussing the methods and materials of our study, we present the results of our empirical analysis of mobile UDC practices in Finland. To conclude, we discuss the contributions and implications of our study.

User-distributed content (UDC)

UDC describes the role of horizontal, intra-audience connections in disseminating media content; the audience takes part in the distribution processes by enclosing the content within social relations. Currently, the most prominent UDC tools are interpersonal means, such as e-mail and IM (instant messaging), as well as social plugins such as the Facebook Recommend, Google +1, and Twitter buttons, which the legacy news media have integrated into their webpages (Villi et al., in press). The ease with which social media users can share content with others sets the current situation apart from the traditional mass communication experience (Weeks & Holbert, 2012).

Social media users can act as content brokers who interpret, publicize, and endorse media content. With UDC, there is always an aspect of recommendation involved. This links UDC with word-of-mouth (WOM) communication (Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007; Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010). However, the difference between the two is that UDC is also about distribution (see Mann, Mahnke, & Hess, 2012) or “spreadability” (Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013) in that access to the digital online content itself is often provided with the recommendation. For instance, the recommendation of an online news article by using the Facebook social plugin offers a direct link to the article. In contrast, with WOM, the content is not necessarily distributed. Awareness of its existence is simply fostered by means of expressing an opinion (Villi, Moisander, & Joy, 2012).

UDC is not a new social phenomenon; the sharing of media content predates the Internet (Hermida et al., 2012). Audience members have long shared information about content that they heard on the radio, saw on television, or read in a newspaper or magazine. However, social media platforms and applications and services designed for content sharing can further enable and encourage Internet users to share their media consumption experiences.

Social media allow for word-of-mouth exchange and content distribution on a mass scale (Anderson, Bell, & Shirky, 2013, p. 16; Flynn, 2012). In a world of links and feeds, it is often easier to find the next thing to read, watch, or listen to from friends than it is to stick with any given publication (Anderson et al., 2013, p. 8). Notably, news organizations have begun to recognize the importance of UDC (Hermida et al., 2012; Himelboim & McCreery, 2012; Newman, 2012; Villi, 2012) and are increasingly offering capabilities and tools with which users can engage in UDC, such as social plugins (Nel & Westlund, 2013; Singer, 2014; Villi et al., in press).

The involvement and input of the audience in media content *creation* processes have been discussed quite extensively (Ostertag & Tuchman, 2012; Quandt, 2011). UGC is used as a catch-all phrase to describe material created by the audience in news and nonnews contexts (Wardle & Williams, 2010, p. 784). However, most news media organizations remain hesitant to open the production and editing stages to the audience, indicating tension between media producers and media users (Bruns, 2012; Domingo et al., 2008, p. 334; Hermida, 2011b, p. 21). Media outlets often only allow users to comment on or distribute premade material (Karlsson, 2011, p. 79) or offer “raw material” (eyewitness footage or photographs, accounts of experiences and story tip-offs; Wardle & Williams, 2010, pp. 793–794; Williams, Wardle, & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2011, p. 85). The audience is considered a source of content, rather than being co-producers or co-creators (Hermida, 2011a, p. 184). A defensive mode concerning co-creation is prevalent among journalists (Lewis, 2012, p. 850). In contrast, UDC provides an opportunity for media organizations to capitalize on social networks

without necessarily engaging in close collaboration with the audience. Therefore, we believe that UDC is a functional way for media companies to embrace the participation-centric approach, instead of continuing with the old producer-centric vision of media practices (see Westlund, 2012).

Recent studies on UDC challenge the existing view within academic discourse, which regards UGC as the primary mode of audience participation for media organizations (Newman & Dutton, 2011; Sasseen et al., 2013). In the US, already in 2010, up to 75% of the online audience consumed news forwarded to them through email or social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter (Purcell, Rainie, Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Olmstead, 2010). According to a study by Hermida et al. (2012), two out of five Canadians who use social networking sites receive content on a daily basis from family, friends, and acquaintances via social media. Similarly, 46% of urban Brazilians come across news on social media weekly (Newman & Levy, 2014, p. 68.)

With UDC, the audience can act as the “output department” for media organizations, forming a crowdsourced unit that concentrates on the distribution of media content (Villi, 2012). On a critical note, it should be acknowledged that UDC includes a paradox in the way in which the Internet allows liberation from the old top-down model of mass communication while the discourse on audience participation largely disguises how media companies unilaterally benefit from audience work (van Dijck & Nieborg, 2009). Thus, audience work is an issue to consider when studying mobile Internet users (Manzerolle, 2010) and news consumption in the age of mobile media.

Although social networks are now an important media content channel for many Internet users, the study of how they engage with this content is in its infancy (Weeks & Holbert, 2012). The processes of delivering online content to the audience are often ignored also in news media organizations (Picard, 2011, p. 59). In this study, by utilizing UDC as a conceptual frame, we examine precisely how Internet users share content in the cross-media social networking environment. Importantly, cross-media news consumption is now very much about mobile news consumption.

Mobile news consumption

The legacy news media are increasingly focused on distributing their content across mobile platforms, such as smartphones and tablet computers. The formative developments of mobile news publishing have been described in, for example, Westlund (2013) and Goggin (2011). The shift in directing news content toward the mobile Internet platforms is evident, and smartphones are beginning to play a significant role in the cross-media consumption of news (Chan, in press; Newman & Levy, 2014; Schröder, 2014; Westlund & Färdigh, in press) and as a platform for which news outlets orient their content production (Nel & Westlund, 2012; Westlund, 2012). The rapid growth of mobile services is a key factor driving the move to digital news distribution, and at the same time, the trend is rapidly shifting the balance of readership toward mobile (Sasseen et al., 2013; Wei, 2013). Importantly, when people add mobile devices to their digital inventory, these devices often become their primary medium of digital news consumption (Mitchell et al., 2012a; Newman & Levy, 2014, p. 8). On the other hand, it should be noted that for many, the smartphone is primarily a communication device, and news consumption is just one of the many activities that it can be used for.

The proliferation of mobile devices is giving rise to a new cross-media news consumer, who accesses content through a combination of various devices (Sasseen et al., 2013). “Trans-readership” is another term used to describe the consumption of news on more than one platform (Fortunati, Deuze, & de Luca, 2014, p. 135). Notably, mobile consumption of news does not only take place in the mobile interstices (Dimmick, Feaster, & Hoplamazian, 2010) of everyday life; mobile devices are also used for news consumption in nonmobile situations, such as when sitting on the couch at home. When news media outlets produce mobile news for cross-media consumers, they can create specialized news applications (apps) and other mobile services that offer the same (or even extended) possibilities for interaction as nonmobile sites. However, research shows that even if the main website provides the ability to comment on articles, this dialogical feature is not necessarily available on the mobile websites or apps (Nel & Westlund, 2012, p. 748).

Study rationale

UDC greatly relies on social media and the various social networking platforms. Importantly, social media is increasingly mobile, as people are accessing social media via mobile devices (Humphreys, 2013, p. 22). Studies suggest that mobile devices afford an opportunity for the increased use of SNSs and help users feel constantly connected to their friends (Quinn & Oldmeadow, 2013, p. 237).

By offering a perpetual and ubiquitous connection (Karnowski & Struckmann, 2014) to both online news content and social networks, mobile devices support the sharing of media content and the consumption of shared content. Wei, Lo, Chen, Zhang, and Xu (2011) suggest that the size of one’s mobile social network appears to be correlated with mobile news consumption. In the US, almost half of smartphone users and 39% of tablet users obtain news through a social network “sometimes” or “regularly” (Sasseen et al., 2013). The study by Holcomb, Gottfried, and Mitchell (2013) demonstrates that a large share of those who obtain news on a social networking site often consume news on a mobile device. For example, in the case of Twitter, this share is 54%, and with Facebook, the share is 38% (Holcomb et al., 2013). Therefore, disseminating media content on social media platforms by using mobile devices and consuming that shared content on mobile devices create a natural synthesis of UDC and mobile news consumption, which we discussed in the two previous sections.

On the other hand, according to data from the US presented by Mitchell, Rosenstiel, and Christian (2012b), the audience’s reliance on UDC is strikingly similar across desktop and laptop computers, smartphones and tablet computers. It seems that social media users are social media users, and the device of choice seems to have little impact in this regard (Mitchell et al., 2012b). In addition, other U.S. research (Media Insight Project, 2014) indicates that many of the “trans-readers” (Fortunati et al., 2014) are in fact platform-neutral in the sense that the device with which the news is consumed is not significant, whereas the means of discovery (e.g., social media or search) is.

From this, it is possible to conclude that being a mobile Internet user does not strongly define one’s conception of oneself as an online news consumer. Rather, it may be the ubiquity of the mobile device, the context of use, the services offered for mobile Internet users, and the demographics that affect how mobile Internet users consume online news. These attributes differentiate mobile Internet users from nonusers of the mobile Internet. In our study, we classify those who use the Internet with their

smartphones daily, weekly, or monthly as mobile Internet users. This category also contains those who use the Internet with a tablet computer (the use of these two device types being overlapped in our study).

Because we study UDC practices among mobile Internet users on a rather general level, it is not possible to examine the exact day-to-day practices of mobile UDC. We cannot draw a distinction between how mobile Internet users distribute content with their mobile devices and how they engage in UDC via other means, such as laptop or desktop computers. In other words, we study UDC empirically among mobile Internet users, not how they specifically engage in UDC with their mobile *devices*.

Following the thematic structure of the paper, our first research question focuses on mobile news consumption by describing the consumption of media content among Finnish mobile Internet users:

RQ1. What online media content do Finnish mobile Internet users consume?

The second research question relates more specifically to mobile UDC as we concentrate on media content distributed by mobile Internet users and the platforms and services they use in this.

RQ2. What online media content do Finnish mobile Internet users distribute, and which platforms and services do they utilize?

In order to further understand Finnish mobile Internet users' practices and motives in distributing online media content, we utilize our third and fourth research questions to compare mobile Internet users and nonusers of the mobile Internet.

RQ3. What are the differences (if any) between Finnish mobile Internet users and nonusers of the mobile Internet in terms of online media content distribution?

RQ4. What are the motives of Finnish mobile Internet users and nonusers of the mobile Internet for distributing online media content?

Data and method

This study utilizes results from a survey carried out in Finland with 1,081 respondents. The survey was conducted in July 2012. Finland is an advanced society in terms of the diffusion of ICT. The broadband connections in Finland are highly developed, mobile phones and especially smartphones are widely used and mobile broadband is common. According to the European Commission (2013), Finland has the second highest mobile subscription penetration in the EU, and its mobile broadband penetration is the highest in the EU. For telecommunications companies, the mobile market in Finland is very competitive. About half of Finnish people between the ages of 16 and 74 use the Internet with a mobile phone, the younger age groups being more active (of 16–44 years olds, more than 70% are mobile Internet users; Statistics Finland, 2013).

The Finnish newspaper industry is characterized by a strong subscription model and home delivery system. In television and radio, the trend over the previous two decades has been to deregulate and open up more possibilities for commercial companies to take part in broadcasting. However, the national broadcasting company is still a key player. In general, the Finnish news media have been slow to change because they have done so well in a protected market (Lehtisaari et al., 2012, p. 53). However, recently,

the Finnish news media have been increasingly channelling content toward mobile devices.

In this sense, Finland offers an apposite context for studying mobile news consumption practices. Finland can easily be compared to neighbouring countries such as Sweden, where news consumption and the mobile market are very similar (European Commission, 2013; for studies concentrating on Sweden see, e.g., Baron & Hård af Segerstad, 2010; Westlund & Weibull, 2013). Another similar point of comparison regarding newspaper consumption and smartphone and mobile broadband penetration is Japan; however, the practices of the Japanese media industry in terms of providing mobile news content are very different from those of the media in Finland (Villi & Hayashi, 2014).

The survey focused on the use of social media platforms and mobile devices in the consumption, production, and distribution of online media content. We produced the questionnaire and compiled the dataset as part of our Mobile Social Media and Media Organizations research project. The questionnaire was quite extensive, and for the purposes of this paper, variables regarding social media and mobile media consumption were analyzed. The survey was carried out by a Finnish market research company (Taloustutkimus) using the company's Internet panel. The sample was randomly obtained from the Internet panel within the limits of the target group.

The members of the Internet panel were recruited from the general population and represented the population in terms of age, gender, and place of residence. Those in the Internet panel were, logically, Internet users. In our sample, ages ranged between 15 and 79 years (mean of 47 years), and the gender split was equal, 50% ($n = 540$) being women and 50% ($n = 541$) being men. The sample was representative of Finnish Internet users, and the results can be generalized to the entire population of Finnish Internet users. The margin of error ranges between 0.9 and 3.2%, depending on the question ($p < .05$). This margin of error applies to the entire survey, not a single analysis. Due to the use of an Internet panel, the response rate is not relevant.

In the questionnaire, the use of Internet via various devices was measured by one question, which enabled us to divide the respondents into two groups: mobile Internet users ($n = 473$) and nonusers of the mobile Internet ($n = 608$). The types of Internet use (email, searching for information, reading blogs, SNS, etc.) were examined by using a 21-item list. The distribution of online content was measured by using two types of questions. First, the use of various services and platforms for distribution (email, Facebook, etc.) and the types of content distributed (online news, photos, videos, etc.) were measured in terms of frequency (daily, weekly, monthly, never). Second, the motives for distributing content and consuming distributed content (such as the entertaining character, personal importance, or topicality of the content) were measured with a Likert scale.

Table 1. Internet device use (%; $N = 1081$).

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Never	total
Laptop	50	10	8	32	100
Desktop	56	13	9	22	100
Smartphone	23	9	12	56	100
Tablet	4	2	2	92	100
Television	2	1	4	93	100
Game console	0	1	3	96	100

eReader	0	0	0	100	100
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Table 2. Various types of online activities performed when using a smartphone (%; $N = 473$).

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Never	Total
Using email	36	15	21	28	100
Reading newspaper and magazine content	25	20	20	35	100
SNS	14	16	19	51	100
Listening to music	14	15	18	53	100
Reading online conversations	7	11	17	65	100
Listening to the radio	6	9	20	65	100
Watching videos and TV programs	6	8	19	67	100
Participating in online conversations	2	3	8	87	100
Watching TV (live)	2	2	4	92	100
Writing a blog	0	1	2	97	100

In the first stage, we analyzed descriptive statistics. Then, we studied statistical interdependence by using crosstabs. We carried out the comparison between mobile Internet users and nonusers of the mobile Internet by using crosstabs and tested it by using a t test. Our research questions were descriptive in nature, and therefore, our data and analysis are descriptive as well. We did not control for sociodemographic variables, which can influence the differences between the mobile Internet users and nonusers of the mobile Internet.

Results

According to our survey (see Table 1), Internet use in Finland is still largely based on laptop and desktop computers. A little less than half of the respondents indicated that they use the Internet via a mobile device (smartphone or tablet), 23% of them using a smartphone to access the Internet daily and 4% using a tablet computer to do so daily. These numbers seem to be surprisingly small considering the significant growth in the amount of mobile devices and mobile broadband connections in Finland. One possibility is that when many smartphone apps, for example, are connected to the Internet, not all respondents perceive this as mobile Internet use per se.

Based on Table 1, we divided the respondents in two groups: mobile Internet users ($n = 473$) and nonusers of the mobile Internet ($n = 608$). This division is used as the basis for our analysis of mobile UDC practices. Only a small number of respondents (8%) indicated using a tablet computer. This may stem from the time of data collection (summer 2012), after which there has been a significant increase in the popularity of tablet computers among Finnish consumers.

Table 2 indicates that the most important uses of smartphones when connected to the Internet are communicating via e-mail, reading newspapers and magazines, and engaging in social networks. Interestingly, other types of mass media content are much less popular than newspapers and magazines.

In spite of the small number of tablet computer users in our survey, we can make some observations regarding the media consumption habits of those with tablet computers. The biggest difference between smartphone use and tablet computer use is

that newspaper and magazine content is consumed significantly more often on tablet computers (42% of tablet computer users use the device daily for reading newspapers and magazines, as compared to 25% of smartphone users). In other countries, Mitchell et al. (2012a) and Newman (2012, p. 14) have reached similar conclusions.

Our second research question concentrates on the media content that mobile Internet users distribute and the platforms and services they utilize in doing so. What sets our study apart from previous studies on mobile UDC is our ability to specify the type of media content distributed by mobile Internet users. From our survey data, we can observe that their most frequently distributed content types are online news (58% of mobile Internet users in our study engage in this), photographs (52%), and newspaper content (47%). When looking at the consumption of content distributed by other users, online news (76% of mobile Internet users indicated consuming online news shared with them by others) and photographs (74%) remain the most popular types, with newspaper content trailing these two types of content (69%).

Regarding online television and radio content, both are distributed much less often by mobile Internet users than content originating from newspapers (17% of mobile Internet users distribute television content, and 10% distribute radio content). According to our study, this difference does not relate only to mobile UDC but to UDC in general. Our assumption is that this is at least partly due to text-based content being available for social distribution more widely than television and especially radio content (see also Guo & Chan-Olmsted, 2011). Also, the various social plug-ins seem not to be as commonly attached to television content as they are placed next to newspaper content.

In previous research (Ma, Lee, & Goh, 2012; Newman, 2012; Olmstead, Mitchell, & Rosenstiel, 2011; Villi, 2012), the importance of Facebook as a UDC platform has been emphasized. According to our survey, for Finnish mobile Internet users, email is the most important UDC platform (70% of them use email for UDC), followed by Facebook (62%), and instant messaging (32%). In contrast, Twitter is extremely marginal in Finland because only 6% of the mobile Internet users indicated distributing content via Twitter.

The third research question focuses on comparing mobile Internet users and nonusers of the mobile Internet in terms of their online content-distributing practices. Our results clearly show that Finnish mobile Internet users are much more eager to engage in UDC than nonusers of the mobile Internet (Table 3). Sixty-two percent of

Table 3. Crosstabs of online content distribution and user type ($N = 1081$, chi-square $X^2 = 101,542$; $df = 1$; $p = .000$).

	Mobile user	Nonmobile user	Total
Respondent has distributed online content (engaged in UDC)	62 % (270)	38 % (163)	100 % (433)
Respondent has not distributed online content	31 % (203)	69 % (445)	100 % (648)
Total	44 % (473)	56 % (608)	100 % (1081)

Table 4. Crosstabs of social network use and user type ($N = 1081$, chi-square $X^2 = 77,281$; $df = 1$; $p = .000$).

	Mobile user	Nonmobile user	Total
Respondent has accessed SNS	56 % (324)	44 % (253)	100 % (577)
Respondent has not accessed SNS	31 % (149)	69 % (355)	100 % (504)
Total	44 % (473)	56 % (608)	100 % (1081)

those respondents indicating engagement with UDC are mobile Internet users, whereas 38% of them are nonusers of the mobile Internet. Other recent research (Media Insight Project, 2014) has shown that smartphone owners are two and a half times as likely to obtain news through social media as those without smartphones.

According to our results, mobile Internet users are also more active in accessing social networking sites than nonusers of the mobile Internet (Table 4). The fact that mobile Internet users are more active both in UDC and in the use of SNS is a key result regarding the relevance of mobile UDC as an emerging practice in mobile news consumption.

The specific motives for distributing content are an interesting object of study when comparing mobile Internet users and nonusers of the mobile Internet (RQ4). According to our study, the decision to distribute a certain news item or another piece of online content is affected by such motivational factors as the entertaining character, personal importance, and topicality of the content (Table 5). The influence of the positive and entertaining character of the content in distribution has surfaced in other studies as well (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Newman, 2011). Our results indicate that other motivational factors for engaging in UDC include the novelty of the content and the consideration that others should explore the content also (see also Ma et al., 2012; Weeks & Holbert, 2012).

Regarding these motivational factors, it is significant to notice that mobile Internet users consider every factor to be more important than nonusers do (Table 5). In order to analyse these differences, we used a t test. All differences are highly statistically significant ($p = .000$). In Table 5, the smaller the value on the Likert scale, the more the respondents agree with the importance of the motivational factor for UDC. The results show that the variety of motives for engaging in UDC is more extensive among mobile Internet users and that this indicates a more favourable attitude toward UDC. For the mobile Internet users, the most important motives for UDC are the entertaining character and topicality of the content.

Table 5. Motivations behind online content distribution (mobile Internet users $N = 473$; nonusers $N = 608$, Likert scale: 1 = "Agree"; 5 = "Disagree").

		Mean	SD
Topical	mobuser	2,74	1,44
	mobnonuser	3,35	1,45
Novel	mobuser	2,80	1,38
	mobnonuser	3,42	1,43
Entertaining	mobuser	2,60	1,42
	mobnonuser	3,28	1,46
Skillfully written or produced	mobuser	2,99	1,37
	mobnonuser	3,48	1,40
Important for me	mobuser	2,74	1,37

Interesting to others	mobnonuser	3,31	1,46
	mobuser	3,04	1,33
	mobnonuser	3,55	1,31
Something others should become acquainted with	mobuser	2,82	1,34
	mobnonuser	3,39	1,40
Describes me as a person	mobuser	3,44	1,32
	mobnonuser	3,94	1,19

Conclusion

In this study, our aim has been to advance the knowledge of user-distributed content (UDC) and mobile news consumption. By extending the UDC framework to the domain of mobile media consumption, our goal has been to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of news consumption in the age of mobile media. In doing so, *mobile UDC* has served as a novel perspective. Mobile UDC is manifested in how mobile users can readily share online media content on a perpetual and ubiquitous basis.

We have carried out an analysis of nationally representative data and provided explanations of mobile news consumption and distribution in Finland. The main finding based on the survey of 1,081 Finnish respondents is that mobile Internet users are clearly more active in distributing online media content than nonusers of the mobile Internet. We thus argue that mobile UDC can be used to explain and study practices that are characteristic of mobile news consumption. However, by means of a quantitative study, we cannot provide comprehensive knowledge regarding the reasons for mobile Internet users engaging in UDC as compared to nonusers of the mobile Internet. For this, further research should include a qualitative study of Internet users, inquiring into their online news consumption and distribution practices.

Nevertheless, the quantitative study reported in this paper does contribute both empirically and theoretically to the study of mobile news consumption. In addition, it can provide practical implications for the legacy news media, which must increasingly focus on facilitating the spreadability of their content in social networks (Jenkins et al., 2013; Villi, 2012). The careful cultivation of consumer networks (Kozinets et al., 2010, p. 87) and creating or strengthening a community of online users are important for media organizations (Vujanovic, 2011, p. 144). In doing so, they should target the mobile platforms in which consumers gather and interact. In addition to Facebook and Twitter, one example of such a community platform is the instant messaging application WhatsApp.

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Notes

1. Previous research on mobile news consumption and production in Finland can be found in Ahlroth (2012), Harju, Männistö, and Heinonen (2011), Koponen and Väättäjä (2009), and Pekonen (2012). Importantly, these studies have not focused on mobile UDC, so our study is the first to offer such insights.

2. Online news refers to news content that is often web-specific (e.g., content from such outlets as Gizmodo and Business Insider), whereas newspaper content refers to articles and other online content originating from newspapers.

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